



Now  
That  
You  
Know

# Now That You Know



## How do I use this guide?

**Now That You Know** is for people who have recently tested positive for HIV. It will help you get through the first moments and days after you find out you have HIV. It will also help you figure out what you need to take care of yourself and others in the most healthy, hopeful ways possible.

You may find that you have many questions. You might want to read this guide from beginning to end, or you can look on the **Contents** page for the topic that will be most helpful to you. You can also go to the end to find out about places that offer services to people with HIV.

In some sections there are spaces you can use for writing if you'd like. This helps some people to sort through their thoughts and feelings, kind of like a personal journal. So keep this copy just for you. If you want copies for others, you can download them at [kingcounty.gov/health/hiv](http://kingcounty.gov/health/hiv) or you can request them by calling 206-296-4649.

We hope **Now That You Know** is helpful to you.

Public Health  
Seattle & King County



Produced by:

HIV/STD Program  
Public Health -  
Seattle & King County

206-296-4649

[kingcounty.gov/health/hiv](http://kingcounty.gov/health/hiv)

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formats available

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## Getting through the first moments

**People have all kinds of different responses to having HIV.**

- ➡ Talk to a friend
- ➡ Eat healthy food
- ➡ Watch your favorite TV shows or movies
- ➡ Listen to relaxing music
- ➡ Go for walks, go to the gym or get some other kind of exercise
- ➡ Get plenty of sleep
- ➡ Write about your feelings
- ➡ Talk to a religious or spiritual advisor
- ➡ Talk to a therapist
- ➡ Call your HIV test counselor to check in

- ### My list:



**The first few days:  
Figuring out what you need**

Having HIV is life-changing for most people. It can bring up questions about your expectations for your life and how they may need to change now that you know that you have HIV. People often feel weighed down, thinking they have to make many decisions right away. **It's okay to slow down a bit. You can take charge of your life by taking the time you need to make the best choices for you.**

Like most people, you've probably already made it through some hard times. The questions that follow can help you figure out what you now have in your life to help you AND what else you need. There's room for you to write down the answers if you'd like so you can come back to them later.

**How do I feel about having HIV?**

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**Is there someone I can talk to who also has HIV?**

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**How have I made it through other tough situations?**

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**How have other people I know dealt with difficult situations?**

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**What might make it hard for me to cope?** (Difficulties might include having a hard time handling feelings, not knowing where to turn for help, lacking information about HIV, not having close, trusted friends, concerns about telling people in your life that you have HIV or having fear that people will discriminate against or reject you.)

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**What are my strengths?** (Your list might include such things as you are a good person and have self worth, are flexible and creative in solving problems, have good support or are willing to seek it, and are able to express emotions and face your fears.)

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**What do I need to help me take care of my emotional and physical health?** (Look through **Places That Can Help** to find specific programs and services.)

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Getting help and support

Having support in your life is especially important when you’re learning to live with HIV. Luckily, if you need extra support there are many ways to find it. There are support groups for people with HIV, social activity groups and many other kinds of services available.

To find out about support groups, ways to meet other people who are living with HIV or organizations that can help you with health care, finances, housing, insurance or other needs, see **Places That Can Help**.

Case Managers help people with HIV find services they need such as:

- Free or low cost medical care
- Health insurance assistance
- Assistance with paying for medications
- Financial help
- Food/nutrition assistance
- Housing
- Transportation and child care
- Sexual health counseling
- Substance use treatment programs
- Mental health/counseling services
- Legal assistance
- Other types of services

You can find HIV case managers at these agencies listed in **Places That Can Help**:

- Lifelong AIDS Alliance
- Madison Clinic
- Consejo
- Pike Market Medical Clinic
- YouthCare
- Country Doctor Community Health Centers
- University of Washington Roosevelt Clinic
- Group Health Cooperative
- VA Medical Center

How much support do I have?

Social/Emotional			Notes
A kind person	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
A caring family	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
A supportive partner	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Supportive friends	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Medical/Health			
A health care provider I’m comfortable with	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Accurate medical information	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Health insurance	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Housing/Employment/Financial			
Stable housing	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Stable employment	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Stable income	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Religious/Spiritual			
Spiritual/religious beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
A supportive church, temple, religious organization or spiritual community	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	

Now that you’ve spent some time thinking about what you already have in your life, you can use this information to set up a plan to add things you need now that you have HIV. You may want to look through **Places That Can Help** for specific programs and services.





## What does HIV do to my health?

**HIV is a virus that attacks your immune system.** It enters white cells in your blood. These cells, called CD4 or T-cells, fight infections in your body. Once HIV enters a cell, it makes copies of itself. The cell then releases the copied viruses and they attack other cells. After the CD4 cell releases the copied HIV, the CD4 cell dies. Over time and without treatment, you may not have enough CD4 cells to fight off infections in your body.

HIV also causes **inflammation**. Inflammation is part of the body's response to infection or injury. It helps healing cells leave your bloodstream and get to the infection so they can repair damaged tissue. Inflammation stops when healing has occurred and the infection or injury is no longer there. HIV is a chronic infection – it never completely goes away. This leads to ongoing inflammation.

One of the first places HIV attacks is immune function in your gut. Inflammation in this area makes it harder to take in nutrients from food and makes it easier for germs to pass from your intestines to other parts of your body. This type of ongoing inflammation is linked to many chronic illnesses such as heart disease, kidney problems, diabetes, arthritis, multiple sclerosis and dementia.

**Testing positive for HIV does not mean that you have AIDS or that you are going to get sick soon.** HIV works slowly in the body, so most people with HIV feel and look healthy for many years. A person doesn't have AIDS until HIV weakens the immune system so that it can no longer fight certain illnesses. With the medicines that are available now, people with HIV are living longer, healthier lives.



## What can I do to take care of my health?

**The most important thing to do is get medical care!** Research has shown that people stay healthier longer when they receive medical care from someone who specializes in the treatment of HIV.

As a first step, you may want to make an appointment with Public Health's **One-on-One Program**. The One-on-One specialist can provide initial medical services. They can also help you find other things you might need. One-on-One services are FREE and can be confidential (only you and the clinic will know your name) or anonymous (you don't need to use your real name) – your choice. To set up an appointment, call **206-744-4377**.

One-on-One is a great first step. But it's important to start seeing an HIV specialist. An HIV specialist will help you manage the impact of HIV on your body so you can live as healthy as possible. If you need medical care, your HIV case manager can help you. If you don't have an HIV case manager, call the **HIV/STD Program** at **206-296-4649**.

### One-on-One Program:

The One-on-One specialist can give you two basic blood tests: the CD4 cell (or T-cell) count and the viral load test. These tests give you an accurate picture of how healthy your immune system is right now. HIV attacks your CD4 cells. Knowing how many CD4 cells you have can tell you how well-equipped your immune system is for fighting HIV. The higher your CD4 cell count, the better. The viral load test tells you how much HIV is in your blood. The lower your viral load, the less HIV you have in your system, and the better your immune system can work to keep HIV under control. Contact **One-on-One** at **206-744-4377**.



## ***What HIV medications should I take? When should I start taking them?***

Most people who have HIV should be on medications. The medications available today are effective, easy to take, and have few side effects. **Even if you feel healthy, talk to your HIV specialist about HIV medications.** Medications can slow down or stop the damage HIV is doing to your body.

Here are some terms to know about when you discuss medications with your HIV specialist:

### **CD4 or T-cells**

CD4 cells (also called T-cells) are a type of blood cell that fights germs and infection. They are your **immune system's first line of defense**. HIV attacks and destroys CD4 cells. Over time, if you're not taking HIV medications, the number of CD4 cells you have will go down. This puts you more at risk of getting sick.

### **Viral Load**

Viral Load is the amount of HIV that is in your blood. The more HIV you have in your blood, the quicker your CD4 cell count drops. **Having a high viral load also makes it easier to give HIV to someone else.** Testing viral load helps your HIV specialist see how your immune system is doing and how well medications are working over time.

### **Resistance**

Once you start taking HIV medications, it's important that you take them every day as prescribed. If you miss doses, the HIV inside you can multiply, change, and become resistant, meaning the drugs will no longer work for you. Developing resistant HIV limits your treatment options and is something you'll want to avoid.

**HIV medications work to bring viral load down and CD4 cells up so you can stay healthier longer.** Research shows there are benefits to starting HIV medications if your CD4 cell count is lower than 500. It may also be helpful to start medications before your CD4 count gets this low. **Benefits may include longer life, reduced chances of getting HIV-related illnesses, and reduced chances of giving HIV to someone else.**

For more information about HIV medications, see [thebody.com](http://thebody.com). Click on "Treatment."

## ***What if I can't afford HIV medications and other things I might need?***

Many services are available for **FREE** to people with HIV who have low incomes and live in King, Island, and Snohomish Counties. A federal program called the Ryan White Act funds services for people living with HIV who fall at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. For a single person, this means that your 2011 income has to be at or below \$21,780 per year or \$1,815 per month. The amount changes if you have more people in your household.

Services you can get include complete medical care, HIV medications, dental care, mental health care, drug/alcohol treatment, housing assistance, food and meal programs, case management, and other types of services. An HIV Case Manager will help you find the services that you need. (See the Case Manager information on page 6.) If you have questions about Ryan White services, call the Ryan White Program Manager at **206-205-5507**.





## HIV and hepatitis

HIV-positive people should be tested for hepatitis A, B and C viruses. These viruses harm the liver, an important part of your body that helps you to stay healthy. Each of these types of hepatitis is different from the other in some way. Knowing whether you have hepatitis is important for the following reasons:

- ➡ It sometimes takes a long time to feel sick from hepatitis B or C, so a lot of people don't know they have them until they get tested.
- ➡ If you don't have hepatitis A or B, you can get vaccines that will protect you from getting them. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C.
- ➡ If you do have hepatitis B or C, HIV can make it feel worse by making liver damage happen faster. Your doctor will help you keep an eye on your health and may suggest medicines that treat hepatitis.
- ➡ Drinking alcohol can also make hepatitis worse. If you have hepatitis, you can learn about ways to stay as healthy as possible, such as reducing or avoiding alcohol.

To find out about where to get tested for hepatitis, call the **HIV/STD Program** at **206-296-4649**.

## HIV and women

For information and support specific to your health concerns as a woman living with HIV, you may want to contact **BABES Network**. Babes provides peer counseling, support groups and other services for women with HIV. Contact them at **206-720-5566** or **[babesnetwork.org](http://babesnetwork.org)**.

If you are a woman who is pregnant or considering pregnancy, getting treatment for HIV will make it more likely that your baby will be healthy and free of HIV. It is important to:

- ➡ find a doctor who specializes in HIV care for women,
- ➡ talk with your doctor about HIV medications and pregnancy,
- ➡ continue prenatal care throughout your pregnancy, and
- ➡ talk with your doctor about other ways to keep you and your baby healthy during and after your pregnancy.

Here are some websites that offer helpful information for women:

**[thebody.com](http://thebody.com)** (click on "HIV/AIDS Resource Center for Women")

**[womenshealth.gov/hiv](http://womenshealth.gov/hiv)**





# How do I tell people in my life that I'm HIV-positive?

Deciding whether, when and how to tell people about having HIV is an important part of adjusting to living with HIV. There are many ways that you can prepare yourself. You may want to start by looking at possible risks and benefits of telling people that you have HIV.

## **Risks:**

- ➡ They might feel upset, fearful, worried, sad, disappointed or angry.
- ➡ They might reject you.
- ➡ They might treat you differently or discriminate against you.
- ➡ You might feel guilty or worried about them.
- ➡ They might tell others.

## **Benefits:**

- ➡ They might offer you support, help and unconditional love.
- ➡ You can get the medical care and services that you need.
- ➡ You can reduce the risk of passing HIV to others.
- ➡ You can help others who are at risk for HIV or who just found out that they have it.
- ➡ Your relationships can be stronger because of your trust and honesty.

What would you add to either list? Was it surprising to you that there may be some good things about telling people, such as that they might be very loving and helpful? Did the list of possible benefits make you think of anyone you might want to tell?

Remember that you don't have to tell people right away. Take some time to think about it. You can't know exactly how people will respond to your news, but you can try to prepare yourself for whatever their responses might be. Talking with your HIV test counselor can be helpful.



After you've thought it through and have decided you're ready, these suggestions may be helpful:

## **Find a comfortable setting**

Telling someone that you have HIV can be an emotional experience for both of you. Find a place that is comfortable and private, where you won't be interrupted. Let the person know that you have something important to discuss. Make sure that both of you have plenty of time.

## **Be ready for questions**

People you tell may ask you questions about HIV/AIDS, your health and your plans for taking care of yourself. They may even ask how you got infected. Think about how or whether you want to answer these questions. You may not know the answers to some questions, and some may seem too personal. You can decide what you want to tell people and what you don't. You can give them websites and phone numbers if they would like more information.

## **Be ready for advice**

Offering advice is one way people can feel that they are being helpful. Let them know that you appreciate their support and suggestions. Tell them that you have a lot to think about and are learning how to stay as healthy as possible. You can decide whether the advice they've given is or is not helpful to you.

## **Be prepared for different reactions**

Upset, fearful, angry, sad, worried, betrayed, confused, loving, compassionate, helpful — these are just some feelings people might have in response to learning that you have HIV. Remember that negative reactions are usually based in fear. If someone gets upset, it's usually because they care about you and are concerned about your well-being.



If someone has a strong emotional response, you may want to take a break from the conversation. Be sure to set a time to talk again later. People may need time to adjust to your news. You can also tell them that there are support groups for friends and family of people with HIV (see **Places That Can Help**).

### **You are not responsible for the reactions of others**

Choosing to tell people you are HIV positive requires strength and courage. Some people may be unable to give you much support — especially at first. Even if they're upset, people who care about you usually come around. Most importantly, focus on your self-care and getting support from people who are ready to be there for you.

### **Finding the support you need**

There are many organizations that can help you if you need support (see page 6). Your HIV test counselor or case manager can guide you to these organizations. Counselors, therapists, support groups and phone hotlines are available for you and those close to you. Many of these organizations are listed in this guide in **Places That Can Help**.

### **Talking with children**

If there are young people near and dear to you, they will need special attention. Children can often sense when something major is occurring around them. There are many things to consider when informing children about a serious health issue. You can find good suggestions for talking with your children at these websites:

**[aids.about.com](http://aids.about.com)** (click on "daily life", go to the section "women/seniors/children/teens")

**[risenshine.org](http://risenshine.org)**

**[thebody.com](http://thebody.com)**

**[thewellproject.org](http://thewellproject.org)** (click on "women's center/talking with your children about your HIV status")

### **These questions can help you prepare for telling others:**

- ➡ What do I hope to get out of telling this person?
- ➡ Why does this person need to know?
- ➡ Is this person at risk for HIV because of having sex or sharing drugs with me?
- ➡ Based on what I know of this person, is he/she likely to be very upset?
- ➡ Is this person going to be supportive of me? Do I want this person's support?
- ➡ Can I trust this person to keep my information private?
- ➡ If I don't tell this person, will it hurt his/her feelings?
- ➡ Will I worry more if I don't tell this person?
- ➡ Could telling this person benefit me in some way?
- ➡ Do I feel emotionally strong and supported enough to handle this person's reaction?

### **Will people discriminate against me now that I have HIV?**

People with HIV have faced stigma since the first cases were diagnosed. Like many kinds of injustice, stigma related to HIV is the result of fear. It stems from lack of knowledge about how people get HIV and judgments about people who have HIV.

Fortunately there are now laws that protect people from discrimination based on the fact that they have HIV. If you believe you are being discriminated against because of your HIV status, call the **Seattle Office for Civil Rights** at **206-684-4500** or the **Washington State Human Rights Commission** at **800-233-3247**.





## What about sex?

What you do sexually is only part of your sexuality. Sexuality involves your physical, emotional and spiritual life including your gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, values, attitudes and beliefs. As a result, sexuality usually meets many needs in addition to physical ones.

Now that you know that you have HIV, figuring out how to approach your sexuality is an important part of taking care of yourself. You may want or need to change some things you were doing before getting HIV. You might be so concerned about passing HIV to others that you think you'll just never have sex again. While this is a valid choice at any point in your life, you may feel differently as time passes. You'll probably feel healthy for a very long time. You'll still have sexual needs and desires. You may also have sexual relationships that are important to you and that you'd like to continue. The bottom line is: it's okay to continue sexual activity. You can learn ways to avoid passing HIV to people you have sex with and how to talk to them about your HIV status.

The following questions can be helpful. There's room for you to write if you'd like. If you don't want to write, just read the questions and think about your answers:

**Before you tested positive**, what needs were being met by sex (for example: comfort, companionship, intimacy, love, sexual desires, etc.)? List as many needs as you can think of:

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**How often did you use drugs** or alcohol when you were having sex?

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**How does knowing** that you could pass HIV to partners through unprotected sex make you feel?

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**How do you feel** about talking with sexual partners about the fact that you have HIV?

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**What information do you need** to be able to continue sexual activity as safely as possible? (You may need information on: talking with partners, sexually transmitted diseases, safer sex/risk reduction, HIV transmission, etc.)

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**What other ways** besides sex have you found to meet needs for closeness, support, fun, entertainment, love and friendship?

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## What is Serosorting?

Serosorting is choosing a sexual partner who you know has the same HIV status as you. This can be a way to decrease the risk of passing HIV to someone else. Serosorting can help to protect your partners and your community from HIV. But, there are some important things to consider:

- ➡ Serosorting doesn't protect against other STDs. STDs may be more serious and difficult to treat when HIV is present. Condoms can reduce the risk of getting other STDs. It's important to remember that you can still get syphilis and other STDs from oral sex.
- ➡ Serosorting does not protect you from getting a different strain of HIV. Getting more than one strain of HIV is called **superinfection**. This can make your HIV progress faster. You could also get a strain of HIV that is resistant to HIV medications.
- ➡ Serosorting is not effective with partners whose status is unknown or who are HIV negative.
- ➡ If your partner is HIV negative or you have ANY doubt about your partner's HIV status, use a condom.

For more information on serosorting, go to [KingCounty.gov/health/hiv](https://kingcounty.gov/health/hiv) and click on "Publications."

## Sex and Safety

HIV is contained in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. The only way to be sure that you don't pass HIV to a sexual partner is to avoid any contact that would allow these body fluids into a partner's body. This includes unprotected anal, vaginal, and oral sex. If you do have sex, you have to change some things in order to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others. Once you have HIV, it is responsible and respectful to:

- ➡ Talk with your HIV specialist about when to start HIV medications. Taking HIV medications helps keep the virus in check, making it harder to pass HIV to partners.
- ➡ Use condoms for anal or vaginal sex. Condoms are very good protection, although not 100%.
- ➡ Tell people before you have sex with them that you have HIV.
- ➡ Make decisions together about how to approach sex in ways that are safer.
- ➡ Learn about things you can do sexually that are less likely to pass HIV.
- ➡ If you're sexually active, get tested for other STDs regularly. STDs don't always have symptoms but can still be passed to partners. Having HIV can make it easier to get and pass other STDs. And left undetected, other STDs can make it more difficult for your body to fight HIV.
- ➡ Be careful with oral sex. If your partner has inflamed gums or mouth sores, using a condom or other barrier can reduce the risk of passing HIV.

These strategies can also help reduce your risk of getting or passing other sexually transmitted diseases. For details on safer sex, condom use and other protection strategies, check out these websites:

[aids.org](https://aids.org)

[hivstopswithme.org](https://hivstopswithme.org)

[positive.org](https://positive.org)

[thebody.com](https://thebody.com)

[hivinsite.ucsf.edu](https://hivinsite.ucsf.edu) (click on "Daily Living")

[kingcounty.gov/health/hiv](https://kingcounty.gov/health/hiv)

[proinf.org](https://proinf.org)



## How do I tell people I've had sex with that I have HIV?

Talking with people you've had sex with is different than talking with others in your life. You may hear this called "disclosure" or "notifying partners." It can be uncomfortable to think that you could have passed HIV to people you've had sex with, and it's sometimes difficult to talk about it. It's common to think partners will get angry or reject you. Although this can happen, it often doesn't. Partners may appreciate being told.

Here are some good reasons to tell people you've had sex with before you knew you had HIV:

- ➡ The only way they can know if they have HIV is to get tested.
- ➡ If they test positive for HIV, they can learn how to take care of their health. They can also learn how to reduce the risk of passing HIV to other people they have sex with.
- ➡ If they don't have HIV, they can learn more about reducing their risk of getting it.
- ➡ Women who are pregnant and know they have HIV can reduce the risk of passing HIV to their babies.

You can be helpful by telling them about the help and support you've learned about since finding out you have HIV. Turn to the people who care about you — friends and professionals that you trust. They may be willing to help you, maybe even practice with you before you talk to a sex partner, and to be there for you afterwards.

**Be SAFE!**  
Don't risk being physically harmed!  
If you think this could happen,  
**DON'T** talk with a partner alone.



## *It's hard to think about telling people I've had sex with. I don't know if I can do it.*

If you feel uncomfortable telling people you've had sex with that you tested positive, there are trained counselors at the local Public Health Department who can help you.

The Public Health counselor can arrange to meet with the partner in a private setting. After explaining to the partner that he or she has had sexual contact with someone who has tested positive for HIV, the counselor will answer questions and offer free HIV testing.

**No information is given to the partner about you.**

Another option is to have a Public Health counselor with you when you tell a partner. This is especially helpful if there will be a continuing sexual relationship between you and the partner. All of these services are available to you **FREE** of charge.

## *Do I have to tell every person I have sex with from now on?*

Telling your partner before having sex helps to protect you medically, legally and ethically. When a partner knows you have HIV, it often affects the decisions they make about safer sex. If they find out after sex, they may feel upset that they weren't told and try to pursue legal action against you.

To learn about the specifics of the laws about HIV in Washington State, go to **doh.wa.gov** (enter "HIV laws" in the search box at the top of the page).

When you tell a partner, you can both decide how to have sex as safely as possible. Although being honest about your HIV status can be difficult, it can also go very well. Telling a partner about your HIV status shows respect and caring for yourself and your partner.

For help with talking with partners about your HIV status, call the **HIV/STD Program** at **206-296-4649**.



## Alcohol, drugs and HIV

Learning that you have HIV may affect your use of alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs. There are two very common reactions:

### “Help me deal”

You might find yourself turning to alcohol, cigarettes, or illegal drugs to ease stress or handle tough emotions. Right away, you might feel like getting drunk or high just to numb out for a while. Once the news settles in, however, you’re likely to stop or cut back.

On the other hand, you may notice slower changes in your substance use. Maybe you start drinking more in the middle of the week. Maybe you start smoking again after quitting years ago. Depression, fear, shame, feeling nervous about sex ... these are hard, every day challenges of being HIV-positive. Over time, you may start relying more and more on alcohol or drugs to handle them.

### What to do:

- ➡ Take a clear look at your drug, alcohol, or cigarette use. Are you using more or more often? What patterns do you notice?
- ➡ Think about your limits. “I know I’ve gone too far if \_\_\_\_\_.”
- ➡ Look at other ways you might deal with stress or feelings. What has worked for you in the past?
- ➡ Use as safely as possible. For example, don’t drink and drive or mix several drugs in one evening.
- ➡ If you’re in recovery and worried about relapse, make a support plan right away. Consider returning to support groups like AA or NA.
- ➡ **You can pass HIV on to someone else. Do NOT share your needles or works with anyone. Plan ahead how you will avoid sharing needles or how you will use condoms, even when you’re high or drunk.**



### “The Wake-up call”

If you think you got HIV as a result of drugs or alcohol (sharing needles or having sex while high or drunk), this may be a turning point for you. Getting HIV motivates many people to cut down or to stop using once and for all. They see how bad the consequences have been. Or they start thinking more about their health. Maybe this is a time to make an important change in your life, too.

No matter why you want to cut down or quit, know that you can. There are many services that have special funding for people who have HIV. You’ll find information about them in **Places That Can Help**.

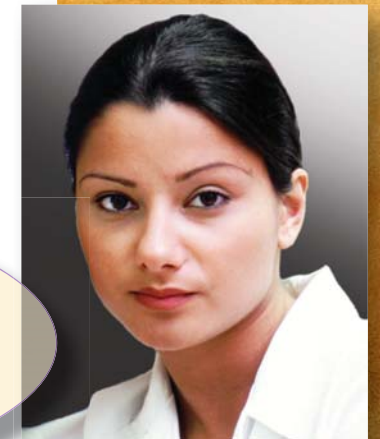
### What to do:

- ➡ Ask for help right away — a friend, family member, anyone you trust. You don’t have to do this alone!
- ➡ Don’t know where to start? Try your doctor, case manager, needle exchange staff, or a telephone helpline. They can suggest good options for you.
- ➡ Be patient. Even though you are ready to quit today, it often takes a bit longer than you want to get into programs. You may get discouraged. Don’t let this stop you! Stay on track!

Contact:

**Washington Recovery Help Line at 1-866-789-1511**  
**[warecoveryhelpline.org](http://warecoveryhelpline.org)**

**Alcohol/Drug Help Line at 206-722-3700**  
**[adhl.org](http://adhl.org)**





## Facts about alcohol, drugs and HIV

- ➡ Alcohol and most street drugs can **weaken your immune system**. So can factors that come with substance use like staying up all night, not eating well, and stress. The more you use, the less your immune system can work to fight HIV or other infections.
- ➡ Many **drugs also affect HIV itself**. Studies show that stimulants such as crystal meth make HIV spread more quickly in the brain.

## What about HIV medications?

- ➡ A lot of HIV medications don't go well with street or party drugs. Your HIV medications might not work as well. Some may increase your risk of getting too high or even overdosing.
- ➡ Taking your medications as directed by your doctor is critical to control your HIV. Your HIV might get worse if you are too drunk or high to take your pills on time.
- ➡ Alcohol is cleared in your liver, the same place your HIV medications end up. If your liver is too busy taking care of alcohol all the time, it may not process your meds very well.



It is very important to be honest with your doctor about all alcohol or drug use. Most providers will respect your honesty and do their best to help you without judging you.

## Places that can help

You do NOT have to be alone as you adjust to living with HIV. There are many organizations that can help you.

### Information and care services

**HIV/STD Program** — 206-296-4649

[kingcounty.gov/health/hiv](http://kingcounty.gov/health/hiv)

Information on HIV and referral to services important to people living with HIV.

**Washington State HIV/AIDS Hotline** — 1-800-272-2437

[doh.wa.gov/cfh/hiv/default.htm](http://doh.wa.gov/cfh/hiv/default.htm)

Information and referrals to services for people with HIV in Washington.

**CDC National STD/AIDS Hotline** —

English service: 1-800-232-4636, 8am-8pm Monday-Friday

Spanish service: 1-800-344-7432, 8am-8pm Monday-Friday

TTY: 1-800-243-7889, 8am-8pm Monday-Friday

[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

### Health care

**Bastyr Center for Natural Health** — 206-925-4665

[bastyrcenter.org](http://bastyrcenter.org)

Free or discounted natural health care for low income people living with HIV.

**Country Doctor Community Health Centers** — 206-299-1600

[cdchc.org](http://cdchc.org)

Medical care, case management, mental health and nutrition services for people living with HIV.

**Group Health Cooperative** — 206-326-2800

[ghc.org](http://ghc.org)

HIV medical care and case management.



**Kang Wen Clinic** — 206-322-6945

[kangwenclinic.org](http://kangwenclinic.org)

Complementary and alternative medicine for people with life-challenging illnesses (sliding scale or low cost).

**Hepatitis and Liver Clinic** — 206-731-6475

[uwmedicine.org/PatientCare/MedicalSpecialties/SpecialtyCare/HARBORVIEW/Hepatitis](http://uwmedicine.org/PatientCare/MedicalSpecialties/SpecialtyCare/HARBORVIEW/Hepatitis)

Treatment for chronic hepatitis and other liver conditions.

**Madison Clinic** — 206-744-5100

[madisonclinic.org](http://madisonclinic.org)

Medical care, case management, mental health, risk reduction and nutrition services for people living with HIV.

**Neighborcare Health** — 206-461-6935

[neighborcare.org](http://neighborcare.org)

Medical and dental care for people living with HIV.

**One-on-One Program** — 206-744-4377

[kingcounty.gov/health/hiv](http://kingcounty.gov/health/hiv)

Free, anonymous, viral load testing, T-cell testing and other services provided by Public Health for people newly diagnosed with HIV. Helps people find long-term HIV care.

**Pike Market Medical Clinic** — 206-728-4143

[neighborcare.org](http://neighborcare.org)

Adult primary medical care, HIV case management, social services.

**University of Washington Primary Infection Clinic** — 206-667-5743

[depts.washington.edu/hpic](http://depts.washington.edu/hpic)

Research studies for people with new (less than 30 days) or early (less than 6 months) HIV.

**UW Roosevelt Virology Clinic**

(University of Washington Medical Center) — 206-598-8750

[uwmedicine.org](http://uwmedicine.org) (search for "Roosevelt virology")

Medical care for people living with HIV.

**VA Puget Sound Health Care System** — 206-762-1010, 800-329-8387

[pugetsound.va.gov](http://pugetsound.va.gov)

Medical care, mental health, substance use and case management services for Veterans living with HIV.

## Support services

**Alcohol/Drug Help Line** — 206-722-3700, 800-562-1240 (WA only)

[adhl.org](http://adhl.org)

Confidential assistance and guidance for alcohol/drug related problems.

**BABES Network** (YWCA): A Sisterhood of Women Facing HIV Together — 206-720-5566

[babesnetwork.org](http://babesnetwork.org)

One-on-one peer support, mental health counseling, support groups & education for HIV-positive women.

**Bailey-Boushay House** — 206-322-5300

[baileyboushay.org](http://baileyboushay.org)

Residential nursing care, adult day services and HIV case management.

**Chicken Soup Brigade** — 206-957-2010

[lga.org/csb](http://lga.org/csb)

Groceries, meals and nutrition counseling.

**Consejo** — 206-461-4880

[consejo-wa.org](http://consejo-wa.org)

HIV case management and chemical dependency treatment program.

Services offered in Spanish and English.

**Crisis Line, 24 hour** (Crisis Clinic) — 206-461-3222

[crisisclinic.org/main.html](http://crisisclinic.org/main.html)

Immediate help for individuals, families and friends of people in emotional crisis or who need emotional support.





**Entre Hermanos** — 206-322-7700

[entrehermanos.org](http://entrehermanos.org)

Support for members of the Latino GLBT community.

**Lifelong AIDS Alliance** — 206-328-8979

[llag.org](http://llag.org)

Housing, food and nutrition services, insurance continuation, transportation, case management, and emergency financial assistance for people living with HIV. Services also include prevention education and national public policy advocacy.

**NEON** — 206-323-1768

[crystalneon.org](http://crystalneon.org)

HIV prevention for men who use crystal. Peer education, counseling and support to manage, cut back or stop use.

**POCAAN** (People of Color Against AIDS Network) — 206-322-7061

[pocaan.org](http://pocaan.org)

Client advocacy for people newly diagnosed with HIV; programs for African American, Latino, transgender and gay/bisexual men; chemical dependency counseling and mental health counseling.

**POZSeattle**

[pozseattle.org](http://pozseattle.org)

Social activities for HIV-positive gay men: coffees, bowling, dining outs, hikes, picnics, potlucks, Cuff Nite, etc.

**Rise n' Shine** — 206-628-8949

[risenshine.org](http://risenshine.org)

Emotional support, advocacy and education for children and teens affected by HIV.

**Rosehedge/Multifaith Works** — 206-324-1520

[rosehedge.org](http://rosehedge.org)

Enhanced assisted living services for people with AIDS, transitional housing, Shanti and Careteam emotional/spiritual support (non-denominational), peer coaching for addiction recovery.

**Seattle Area Support Groups and Community Center** — 206-322-2437

[sasgcc.org](http://sasgcc.org)

Emotional support for HIV positive, LGBT and recovery communities.

**Seattle Counseling Service** — 206-323-1768

[seattlecounseling.org](http://seattlecounseling.org)

Individual counseling, groups and substance abuse treatment for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

**Seattle Office for Civil Rights** — 206-684-4500

[cityofseattle.net/civilrights](http://cityofseattle.net/civilrights)

Enforces City, State and Federal anti-discrimination laws.

**Volunteer Legal Services** — 206-461-3200, or dial 2-1-1

[kcba.org/pbs/VLS.aspx](http://kcba.org/pbs/VLS.aspx)

Assistance with legal service issues.

**Washington Recovery Help Line** — 866-789-1511

[warecoveryhelpline.org](http://warecoveryhelpline.org)

24-hour help line for substance use, problem gambling and mental health.

**Washington State Human Rights Commission** — 800-233-3247

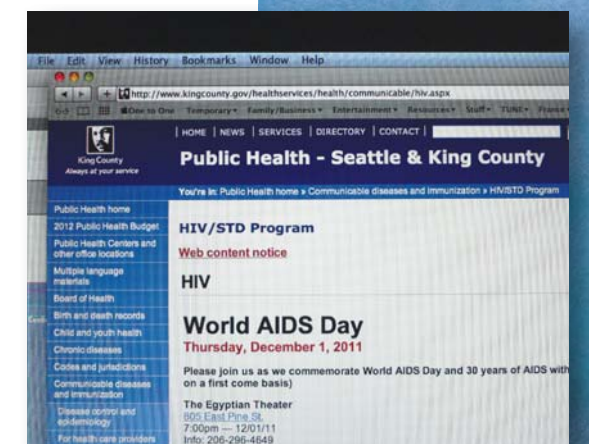
[hum.wa.gov](http://hum.wa.gov)

Investigates HIV/AIDS discrimination complaints, provides information and referral.


**YouthCare** — 206-694-4500

[youthcare.org](http://youthcare.org)

Case management services for HIV-positive youth.








## ***Acknowledgments:***

This publication is the result of many people giving generously of their time and expertise. The editors are particularly grateful to the many people living with HIV whose invaluable input helped to inform this project from the beginning. The editors also wish to acknowledge the many lessons that we have learned from those we have lost to HIV.


We hope that this publication honors their contributions and their memories. Along with the many people who continue working to assist those affected by HIV, the editors hope **Now That You Know** will help people to live well and fully with HIV.

The background of the page is a warm, textured orange-brown color. On the right side, there is a vertical strip of a darker, more textured material, possibly a book binding or a decorative element, showing some wear and discoloration. The main text area is on the left, set against the lighter background.

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Public Health   
Seattle & King County

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